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FROST LIKE ASHES
BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE
NAPALM DEATH & SKID ROW SAYS

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MORTAL TREASON, WAR OF AGES, WARRIOR
TYKKUS, STRANGLAND, CIRCUS DAWN
NINETEEN88, DEAD IN CHRIST, ASHEN MORTALITY



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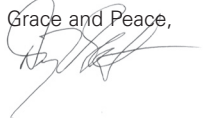
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HEAVEN'S METAL

Album Reviews & Friendship Don't Mix.

While I laugh at Lester Bangs' writing from *Creem Magazine* (and those scenes from *Almost Famous*), I agree with Frank Marino's assessment of that 70s rock-write: "It's mean." I refuse to take his advice that "artists are the enemy." I've enjoyed making friends with many an artist. But, man, is it difficult to give that friend a critical album review. And thus I was excited to splash a giant cool color spread of Stryper in the latest (Sep/Oct #115) issue of HM Magazine, treating them with the respect they deserve, and also putting them on the cover of this issue of Heaven's Metal. It's almost a way of "balancing out" that one review that I felt compelled to write in honesty. So it is cool to get past one review and focus on the band that pioneered so much of what we listen to. As soon as this issue ships out, I should be heading out to help emcee the *Up From The Ashes* follow-up/makeup concert with Holy Soldier, Once Dead, Ultimatum. If any of you bought advance tickets for the cancelled/postponed *Beyond The Mountain Fest*, I hope to see you there!

Grace and Peace,



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1-year subscriptions (6 issues): \$7.77 (USA)
\$21 (Foreign)

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512.989.7309 | 6307 Cele Rd #573, Pflugerville TX 78660
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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



Frost Like Ashes

BY DANIEL JESSE

In the murky mire, men have emerged from the vast wasteland of the barren fields to form an alliance to bring another dimension into the crowded space and time of this epoch. A voice has manifested itself to declare their vision; that voice has concealed itself as Frost Like Ashes. This voice has multiple personalities, that of a plural, unified voice as the entity "Frost Like Ashes," and then individually. The one that is called Sebat chose to speak to me words about the plural entity.

I asked Sebat about the origin of this creation, as I wondered how the group found each other in such a "God forsaken wasteland" that is the American Midwest. He simply stated that it was "divine intervention" that brought these five souls together. He said, "the miraculous has played such a huge part of the picture." This would seem to be a normal part of a group coming together, but Sebat made this distinction, "I actually find it odd that other projects that are put together by Christians don't have the same kind of things happening." Thus there is an aura that sets Frost Like Ashes apart from everything that is going on in the metal scene. There are connections being made that are at the right time, and at the right place that has helped sustain the group.

These connections define success for the group. "The success that I talk about is finding like minded people, who have a common faith, who are able to come together and play music that is good." It is not enough then that people with the same ideas come together, it is that they can produce art, which is quality. He continues on, saying that, "I earnestly desire to see all that I come into contact with to know Jesus better... but my music is to be artist(ic)... not just a soap box to preach from..." This statement reflects where the focus is, and should be. It is music for the sake of being music, art in and of itself. There is the desire to evangelize that pushes the music forward, but it is not the main function of the music.

Hence, this conglomerate is bending the cultural norm, trying to reshape the view of music, so that the definition includes all forms of music. That is what Frost Like Ashes is, a contortion of genres so that the melodic and the brutal exist together, and in one accord. There is the harshness of the vocals and guitars, the convulsions of the rhythm section, and the accenting melody of the keys.

But even in the seriousness shown in the pictures and live show, there is the heart of entertainers, that realize to entertain, one does not have to be serious all the time. In fact, Sebat speaks of an attitude that does overplay the seriousness, and allows a band to do what bands should; Which is to have fun, and to be a release for creativity. Without this, the group will implode, and become extinct.

News bullets

To quote the *Beyond the Mountain* festival website: "We are deeply saddened to report that *Beyond the Mountain Music* festival is being postponed... However, we are looking at a venue in Chicago for a late October date. Fans who cannot attend the rescheduled show can get a refund. An announcement should be made by the time we go to press. If you received your tickets online via Paypal, you should have received an email with information regarding your refund. For more info, of course, go to beyondthemountain.com

Roxx Productions, in lieu of the cancelled BTM fest, is sponsoring an alternate benefit show on August 27 called *Up From The Ashes*. This show will provide funds for Rockers Helping Rockers Across Nations, an international outreach in Mexico City for Christ. Because UFTA and BTM are not affiliated, there will be a charge of \$15. *Up From The Ashes* features **Neon Cross**, **Holy Soldier**, and **Ultimatum**, to name a few. For more information go to: beyondthemountain.com. **Namia**, **Mortification**, **Holy Soldier**, and **Saviour Machine** will perform for other Rockers Helping Rockers Across the Nations concerts. Holy Soldier will reunite all of their original debut album members to raise money for this project. For more info, check out holysoldier.net.

Band mates **Joey Daub** and **Kurt Bachman** recently finished their first new **Believer** tune, despite conflicting schedules. Two more songs are in the works, and the writing team will continue to devote time to Believer. The band asks for help from fans who have or know anyone with bootlegged Believer concerts or footage of the band for a possible DVD! If you can help, please contact Joey, and visit joeydaub.com.

Victory Records metalcore band **Sinai Beach** is currently looking for a new guitarist. For more info check out sinaibeach.net.

The self-titled 1987 **Whitecross** CD is newly recorded and available now. **Missionary One** began laying tracks on July 13, with **Scott Wenzel** on lead vocals. The band has posted samples of their rerecording at whitecrossband.com.

Ryan Clark of **Demon Hunter** informs us that their new album, *The Triptych*, will be available initially with 3 different limited edition album covers. "We're covering Prong's 'Snap Your Fingers, Snap Your Neck.' It will be our most technical and diverse album yet."

Michael Bloodgood played a song with **Bryan Duncan** and the **Nehosoul** band on Sunday, July 24 at Cedar Park Assembly in Bothell, WA. Michael just got a Peavey endorsement and is waiting for a new 5-string bass to arrive.

Extol will be opening for Opeth on their European tour in September.



Becoming The Archetype

BY DANIEL JESSE

I recently had the opportunity to talk to Becoming The Archetype, but found myself lost. You see, I have only heard of this band, and have not experienced their music first-hand. This made my job actually easier, as I had to merely ask questions about what the band thought of itself, without having really invested a bias for or against this band.

The first thing that I asked them was, what does a listener expect to hear, and what should they expect to hear. I wanted to know if they found that their fans see the band in a different light than the band does.

As they are on a predominately hardcore record label, they have been labeled “the metal band on Solid State.” This both helps and hinders fans, their vocalist Jason explains. It helps in the fact that listeners are looking for something metal from them, but this might be too narrow of a view to accurately portray the group. When pressed on what genre they fit in, Jason states that they are progressive metal. Progressive, in this case, meaning that they take and blend different genres into their own sound. He continues that, “Our sound combines influences from just about every form of heavy music; death metal, thrash, hardcore, progressive rock, etc. Listeners will even notice jazz influences along with classical piano and guitar.” Even though he says that genre is irrelevant, he also admits that they are, and will always be metal.

The second question was an easy one, and one that I figured I had the correct answer to. The album’s title, *Terminate Damnation*, sounded very familiar to me. This name is in homage to Mortification, specifically “one of the best songs on that album (*Scrolls of the Megilloth*).” The members of the band have found that they owed a lot to the forefathers of Christian Metal, and figured that this tribute fit the music, and the spiritual significance attached.

The third question got a familiar answer also. I asked Jason what he thought about being labeled as a Christian band, and what he thought about the scene as it is today. He stated that the scene has been sick for a while, and that fans focused on other things than the ‘old school’ fans did. “It seems now that even among Christian concert goers, a lot of people are more concerned with fashion and who can do the coolest move in the mosh pit, instead of worshiping God, fellowshiping with other believers and taking the music and concert experience as an opportunity to share the Gospel with unbelievers.” This is not how the scene acted at a time, but has degenerated to this point.

In conclusion, he embraced the label Christian, and said, “God willing, always will be.” As a final word, he said, “To the reader: please pray that we would be able to persevere both as a band and as individuals.”

Ashen Mortality fans will be disappointed that the band has dissolved—however, **My Silent Wake** is a new band formed from its dying embers. My Silent Wake’s lineup includes ex-Ashen members **Ian Arkley**, **Andi Lee**, **Jasen White** (who played a few live shows with AM) and is rounded out by **Alan Southorn**. MSW intend to play live as soon as possible, and to record a new album at the beginning of next year. A two-song demo was recorded and is 16 minutes long.

The Brass Serpent by **Akacia** has hit the shelves. Soon after, Akacia recorded their 3rd album, *This Fading Time*. The band’s record label is determining if and when it will be released. Relentless at writing, the band is already penning their 4th album, *Exit 13* – a concept album that deals with euthanasia. They are rehearsing for a 9/24 gig in Warwick, RI and plan on playing the 36-minute “The Brass Serpent” song in its entirety.

Antidemon is going on their third European tour now. To quote Kleber, “It’s great to play there in the summer, having the opportunity to speak about Jesus Christ to many people there, thanks to God!”

Although there has been some label interest, Swedish black metal band **Admonish** is still waiting for a label to sign *Den Yttersta Tiden*, a disc that they released in April. Admonish will join Inevitable End & Taketh on October 8 to play OktoberMetal in Linköping, Sweden. See oktobermetal.com for more info.

Bride has a new drummer, **Alex Thompson**, who is **Dale Thompson**’s 18-year-old son. In mid-August, the band will return from touring Brazil, and Dale and Troy will begin writing for Bride’s next release. If the music doesn’t sound like Bride, they will release it as a new project. Bride has received inquiries from a new record label run by some big names, and the band hopes to at least negotiate.

Nodes of Ranvier filmed a video for “Glass Half Nothing” the weekend of July 29. **Symphony In Peril**, The Calico System, and Donnybrook will join Nodes of Ranvier on the road, and this caravan will perform at *Hellfest 2005* in New Jersey Aug 19-21. Look for this tour in Tennessee and Missouri in late August.

Slechtvalk is the first black metal band within the Christian realm with a professional DVD. Their single, “Thunder of War” is on the DVD and will be seen on MTV in Europe. The band that dons medieval garb during their shows will tour with **Frosthadr**, and their 3rd album will be out next month.

Fear Dark Records recently signed 2 new bands: **Taketh** plays melodic death metal, and **Royal Anguish** plays death and gothic metal.

Brian “Head” Welch has been actively working on his record. In addition, Brian has developed a heart for helping kids get off the streets. He hired Steve Delaportas of Fortitude Films to not only document his life, but also as a partner in Head Home projects. No stranger to aiding the indigent, Delaportas has aided many orphans in India with *Good News India*. Head Home will help children of all issues such as leper communities, children who were sold to brothels, and other devastating situations. Delaportas is excited to be helping “Head” in his mission... “These children are wanting for little and “Head” is wanting to give so much! I stand in amazement.” Head is also at risk, as he will be visiting across from a cannibal tribe. Updates of Head’s journey and music can be viewed at headtochrist.com.

METAL TRACKS

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Ultimatum

BY MIKE LARSON

Currently in the studio recording with a DVD planned in the months ahead, Ultimatum shows no signs of slowing down. I had a chance to ask Robert Gutierrez, founding member and guitarist a couple questions recently, and I thought I would share.

Heavens Metal: Ultimatum is working on some new material, can you tell us some particulars?

Robert: Yes, we are working on a new project – an EP with 4 songs. It was originally intended for pursuing a record contract. We have some contacts at Metal Blade and they expressed some interest and wanted us to come up with some new tunes and submit those. Now it seems that many of our fans want to get their hands on our new material, so we will most likely put it out as either an EP or add some live tracks to it even if we don't get a contract, per se. The music, however, is definitely Ultimatum. The tracks are "Death Wish," "One for all," "Heart of Metal," and "Blind Faith." The recording has gone great; Sid Garcia from Site 16 Studios here in Albuquerque, NM did a fantastic job capturing our sound better than our previous work. We're really excited about it. Anyone should be able to order it after the first week of August from our site, ultimatum.net.

Ultimatum has been around for quite awhile, 3 albums and multiple compilations later... How do you do it?

Yes we've been around for over 14 years. We started in our early 20's and now we're all 30 something... and we've never relied on getting on a record label, although we were on Rowe Productions distributed by Diamante during the *Puppet* CD stage in 1997, but we just wanted to write heavy metal songs about our faith and our view of subjects and issues. We're all anchored here with family and full-time jobs, so it would be difficult to leave a steady paycheck for touring, but we'll see what God has planned. As far as shows, we do local gigs here at least once a month and we do a weekend shows out of town on occasion. I guess that's the way God had it planned for us up until now. I would like to see Ultimatum do more big festivals like *Beyond the Mountain*. We are excited to be a part of that, and we're going to set our goal for Cornerstone next year.

How has Scott joining Once Dead affected Ultimatum? What are some of the pros and cons?

Well, in all honesty, I didn't really know what to think about Scott and Once Dead. It basically started when some members of Vengeance Rising heard us play one of their songs, "Burn," at the *Extreme Mardi Gras* in California in 2002. They liked our version of it and especially liked the way Scott sang it. When they decided to do a reunion, Roger Martinez didn't want to have any part of it, so they asked Scott to fill in the slot. Scott asked us how we felt. Of course, we gave him our blessing; but at first I was jealous and a little envious of him. I mean, here we are busting our butts to make a dent in this scene and try to do more shows and here one of our own gets to do it with Once Dead. So, it was an ego bruise for me....

[nothin' but] News bullets

Symphony In Peril has recruited **John Pope** of **Narcissus** fame as their new lead vocalist. Absinthe Recordings is celebrating the band's first release by pressing *The Whore's Trophy* on limited edition colored vinyl. Preorders of the record will be available soon as well as an exclusive limited edition t-shirt.

Swedish band **Parakletos** has re-recorded *Se Guds Lamm* to introduce the band's newest members and their talent. Real drums by **Veneror**, female vocals by **Eden**, and new vocals by **Smaelek**.

Tourniquet is working on a new album that is described as "new material the fans will likely consider very heavy and progressive." The band is planning to perform at as many upcoming festivals as possible.

The highly anticipated new release by **Alice Cooper**, *Dirty Diamonds*, hit stores in the U.S. August 2. After an extensive tour of Australia and Europe, American Alice fans can look forward to some September dates, and Canadian fans can look for Alice in October.

Officially announced at *Bobfest VII, Resurrection* is a new festival that will come to life in Stockholm, Sweden on March 10-12, 2006. The lineup includes: Admonish, **Bride**, **Sanctum**, & **Shadows of Paragon**. Go to resurrection.se for more information.

Overdrive, **Theocracy**, **X-Sinner**, **Zion**, and **Disinterment** are all working on new CDs. Some other new releases to look out for include: *Lay Waste The Poets* by **Inked In Blood** (10/11); a new album by the reunited **No Innocent Victim** (Nov); a new one by **xLooking Forwardx** (Nov); *The Years To Come* by **Nodes of Ranvier** (9/13); a new one by **Thy Majestie** (10/3); *Hero* by **Divinefire**; the US release of *Holy Hell* by **Rob Rock** (9/20); *To Sentence The Dead* by **Bloody Sunday**; *Brood of Vipers* by **Seventh Star**; *They Want You Silent* by **Bloodlined Calligraphy**; *The Harvest* by **A Love For Enemies**; *Dying Vine*, the new release by **Aletheian**, was in stores 6/24, along with a new DVD; the re-issue of *Distant Mind Alternative* by **Kohlapse** (8/12); *Soundmass Presents: Oz Mosh 2005*, Australian metal bands including: **Mortification**, **Kohlapse**, **Paramaecium**, and 11 more, as well as a song and film clip by **Virgin Black** (8/12); *Tophet* by **Frost Like Ashes** (7/31); *Tides Of Awakening* by **Tyranny** (10/3); *The Sleep Of Reason* (featuring sleeve art by Travis Smith) by **The Eternal**; and **Swallow the Sun's** second album *Ghosts Of Loss* is due out in Finland on August 24th, and will be available in the rest of the world is October 3rd.

When lead singer **Brian Curtis** of **Kwench** flipped his guitar onstage, he got more than he bargained for—a guitar pic lodged in his throat. Unable to breathe, Brian was rushed to the hospital on July 21st and was hospitalized where the pic was removed surgically. **Kwench**, a band not easily deterred, returned to the stage 12 hours later rocking hard and still flipping guitars. To give them a listen and learn more about **Kwench**, visit kwench.com.

Ultimatum just shot a video for their DVD that will be submitted to *Headbanger's Ball*, VH1, and Fuse TV.



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STRYPER | REBORN AGAIN

INTERVIEW BY ED HELLIG



There are only a few moments in life when you can actually say you're experiencing something you have waited your whole life for. Then, there are other experiences that transcend those, because you never expected them to come. Ever.

Interviewing Michael Sweet was one of those experiences. Growing up as a fan of the band, unwavering in the face of criticism and (sometimes) disparagement, I never imagined that someday I would be on the phone with one of my metal heroes. Up until last year, the promise I made to some of my metal comrades in Brazil upon moving to the US – that I would not die before seeing Stryper in concert – seemed fated to be broken. I was able to fulfill that promise

when I saw the band for the first time in October of last year in Chicago. Now, that promise has extrapolated into something completely unexpected.

So when the opportunity to interview Michael Sweet came, I jumped at it. It would require me to place objectivity ahead of fandom, a task I had previously anticipated to be quite difficult to achieve. Despite my apparent nervousness, Michael was receptive and accommodating. We spoke about the new album being released this month and the tour that will follow, and how Reborn was aptly named. It sees the band reunited and as vigorous as ever, ready to give their fans a new glimpse at a new Stryper with a new bassist, a new sound, and the prospect of a new beginning.

So, how was the interview with Doug (Van Pelt, for the upcoming HM Magazine)?

Michael Sweet: The interview was good. I wasn't let down or anything. Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. When he said 'I gotta apologize for something...I gave you guys a bad review', and I said 'you didn't give us a bad review...' I read it, it wasn't so bad, but hey...everyone is different, ya know? He said 'the reason I gave you a not-so-good review is because it sounds like a Michael Sweet record'. I said to Doug, nicely of course, 'dude, I mean, if you say that about this record, you gotta say that about all of Stryper's records.' I wrote most of the songs for the old records! That was my job within the band. Robert did a lot of the visual stuff, I did the songwriting...and I said 'it's not any different on this record'. So I just told him I was thrown for a loop a little bit because I didn't really know what he was talking about but I said, 'hey man, everyone's got his or her own opinion and everyone is

decided that it was time for it to happen. It was a mutual decision and we all felt like it was best for the band and the best for our individual lives. So, Tim left, we went our separate ways, and shortly after we wound up making the attempt to go to Mexico and do the show there – which of course didn't work out. After that we did the Disney show, in September. So it wasn't long after that (Tim's departure).

What do you think is the strongest memory surrounding the recording of the new album, *Reborn*?

Gosh, it's hard...It was just a really cool, fun time, the whole process. Robert would come out and do his tracks and go home, and Oz would come out and do his tracks and go home...Kenny and I would keep working...A lot went into it and it took a while to do it all. We took our time, we didn't rush anything... and it was fun. We had a great time doing it.

ple...and bring them into the Stryper family, these new fans. It's really hard to do. It's not an easy task. Some people are able to do it, and others fail. We went into the recording process trying to make a record that wasn't over-produced and that didn't have too many effects – which tends to date the sound of the record – and yet on the other hand, we tried to add bits and pieces here and there that were 'typical Stryper': the Stryper sound, with harmony vocals, harmony guitars. You don't have the solos going on in every song and a scream or two or three in every song, but I feel – no I don't feel, I know – that if we did that, it would have dated the record. Yeah, I think that the die-hard fans and the people who are long time Stryper supporters would have enjoyed that, but I don't think that any of the new fans, the younger generation would have. I know my son wouldn't have! I kind of bounce everything off of him. He's 18-years-old.

"After that show, it felt so great and it felt like a new band and we felt excited about the future."

entitled to that.'

So, at which point, last year, did you guys decide to give Stryper another 'go'? Do you know specifically around what point?

Yeah, I started thinking about...I was pretty much opposed to it, because I just didn't feel like it was supposed to happen, but that was until the time we did the Disneyworld show, with our new bass player. After that show, it felt so great and it felt like a new band and we felt excited about the future...just a really cool vibe within the band. It's hard to describe, you had to be there. But, I came home with the idea...I had this record all ready to go, and I came to the guys and said 'why don't we make this a Stryper record?' And they were all very excited and blown away. They didn't expect that at all, and they of course agreed to it and that's what we did. We wound up making this a Stryper record and everyone is just thrilled with the outcome.

Was this around the time that Tim (Gaines, former bassist) decided to leave?

No, this was after that time. Tim had already...you know... let me put it this way: we had parted ways. Let me clarify that. I mean, Tim decided to leave but we also

In retrospective, was it kind of like the old days, and was this a completely new experience as a band?

It was a new experience. In the old days, we all did the record from start to finish. This couldn't be done that way, because we did it in Boston and Robert, as you know, lives in Vegas and Oz lives in California. So it was impossible to do it that way. But it was still a really, really fun experience and everybody had a good time doing it.

I got my promo copy of the album and I have been listening to it non-stop for three or four weeks now. It definitely has a more modern sound to it. You can hear some hints of the trademark Stryper vocals and melodies but...it's definitely not *Soldiers Under Command Volume II*.

No, it's not a repeat of anything that we did in the 80s, and...I know that for die-hard fans that are big fans of that sound and of that time, it's sometimes difficult for them to get past that. For those people, we would only hope that they would keep in mind that we obviously want to continue to bless them with the music of Stryper but yet, on the other hand, we also want to bless many new people and be able to encourage new peo-

He kind of has his finger in the pulse of today's scene...

Yeah, he listens to bands like Underoath, a lot of the new stuff, up-and-coming stuff... He likes old Stryper, but he is also the first to tell me 'ugh, Gosh...what were you guys thinking?' ya know? (Laughs). And that's gotta mean something...we don't want to shut all the young kids out.

Yeah, I mean...how are you going to survive as a band with the support of your older fans only? Some of them have moved on with their musical tastes...what are you gonna do, ya know? Only a few of us still have long hair and...

(Laughs) I know! That's cool, that's awesome, there's nothing wrong with that. It's not so much the appearance...I still have long hair of course...It's just one of those things where I personally try to roll with the times and kind of move forward a little bit. I listen to a lot of different bands, newer bands...I don't really listen to anything old! I never throw in an old Dokken CD, or an old Scorpions CD...although I'm a pretty big Scorpions fan. I just don't listen to that stuff, ya know? If someone puts in a Scorpions CD on, that's fine. We were doing a photo shoot and someone did that and I was like, this is

STRYPER

awesome! But that's just not in my CD player.

If I had to ask, what is in your CD player right now?

I'm really at the moment into a band called Keane. They've become very commercialized, but...that's cool, I really like their sound. I like all different styles of music, ranging from Keane and Coldplay to the edgier side. I really love the Switchfoot record. That was one of my favorite records for a good year. I listen to that all the time.

Do you have a chance to play any praise & worship music at all? Do you participate in your church's worship music?

I do, I do. I go down and lead worship at a church that I'm involved with, on occasion. I go down about every two or three weeks and... it's been a while since I've done it since I've been so busy, but yeah, absolutely. I listen to praise and worship music to learn songs but I don't have that in my CD player. For no particular reason. I have nothing against it. I love praise and worship music. I enjoy worshipping and playing the music myself, but as far as listening to it, just to be honest, I don't listen to a lot of that kind of stuff.

It's kind of funny because...I play bass at my church's worship band and while I'm not necessarily a fan of the Brit rock invasion that we're experiencing right now, I feel like some of the praise and worship bands are definitely drawing a lot of their influences from bands like Blur, Coldplay, U2, and...which is cool, because you have to be relevant.

You really do, especially if you want to be heard. You can't go out there, dressed like 1989, and playing like 1989 and be heard by the masses. It's just not gonna happen. As much as some people wish that it could happen, it just ain't gonna happen. We want to be a band that can go out and be heard by the 18-year-olds, and the 40-year-olds. And the question is, can we accomplish that, and the answer

would just go out in regular clothes – for the most part – and play unbelievably. It was more about the songs. Same with Journey, for that matter. Taking it to another extreme, Journey was definitely more about their musicianship and the performance, versus Kiss, which was all about image. We are kind of in the middle, like I said. I think we're known about the music and musicianship somewhat, and the image somewhat. We're not in that Kiss category where we have to come back with full head-to-toe yellow and black. I think that if we did, it would be total cheese! (Laughs) It would be almost laughable. Maybe some of the old-time, die-hard fans would think 'oh cool', but most people would say, 'what are they thinking?' I want to be taken seriously. I don't want to be referred to as a joke, or to be laughed at. That's why we wanted to incorporate the yellow and black because that's what makes the bold statement, ya know, 'By His stripes we are healed', but in the other hand, there's a way to do it modernized and it's going to be accepted and respected and not be laughed at. That's what we are going to do.

It's obviously hard as it is to be lumped together with the amalgam of hair bands from the 80s. The new sound is going to separate the band from that group that still, to this day, is somewhat maligned. Are you making a conscious effort to disconnect yourself from that?

Yes and no. It's not what drives us, ya know... 'we gotta be different, we gotta be different'...we want to be led by God and the Spirit of God and do what God wants us to do. And many times, what God wants us to do is not what we want to do. But, we don't want to be lumped into the category of just another 80s band, another typical 80s hair band making another typical 80s record, doing another typical 80s tour. We're not that. I don't think we ever were. Nothing against those bands, because there were some great bands from that era, but unfortunately, they're toured out! They're played out! A lot of those bands have been touring since 1990!

"You can't go out there, dressed like 1989, and playing like 1989 and be heard by the masses. It's just not gonna happen."

is yeah, I think we can.

It's gotta be frustrating when you hear people saying, 'oh, the should come back with the yellow and black stripes and do a full-on review of *To Hell with the Devil* and play every song that they played in that album"... the same outfits. It just doesn't fit anymore! It doesn't fit within the reality of where music is right now.

I just think that only a handful of bands kind of have to do that. I'll give you an example: Kiss. Kiss was really known for their image. Let's face it, that's really what they were all about. It was the image, more so than the music. The music was cool, sure, but really the image is what blew people away. That's what they really sold and what they really marketed. So they didn't really have a choice. In other words, when they attempted to do away with that image, they bombed. And when they brought that image back, they sold tickets. They did a tour and sold out. They're all about their image. I'm not knocking Kiss. I was a huge Kiss fan growing up. I'm just trying to make a point. Stryper on the other hand, we were kind of in the middle with, say, Kiss and Van Halen. Van Halen was really less about image...they

I wonder what keeps them going, other than various chemicals... (laughs)

We did tour for a long time...we stopped in 91 and then we came out in 2003, and then we're going to go out again this year, but we're not gonna go out every year and tour for the next 25 years! We want it to be special.

Now, on to the album artwork, which has the potential of raising some eyebrows and it probably already has. Did you guys make a decision to be controversial intentionally, when it came to that particular artwork?

Not really. We wanted to do something really unique and very different. The art director at Big3 Records suggested doing something very abstract and trying something like painting our faces. I thought, yeah, let's try something different as long as it says something.

I agree with you, and here's what I've been telling people: I supposed you could have taken the 'safe' approach and used some picture of

you guys standing next to a tree or something. And instead, you went on a limb and did something that's impressive.

We wanted to take a chance and we did do a day long shoot with loads of pictures of us standing against the walls, or next to a tree with our guitars (laughs)... up on the rooftops with the skyline of New York behind us. We have tons of shots like that. But they have been done a billion times! They look cool and all, we'll use them for other things. We'll use them for some press stuff. I think we might even be using one of them for this (Heaven's Metal). But we wanted the album cover to really make a statement.

Your cover art is your first statement to that fan that's walking into Best Buy and...

That's right. And not only make a statement but we wanted it to apply to the whole theme of the record – Reborn, ya know...and if you read those words and you listen to what we're saying, we wanted that to come across visually and there was no other way to really do that except for the road that we took, which is dipping ourselves into slime, and just portray sin. The black was photoshopped in...and what it says to me is that we are all covered in sin and slime

added yellow dye and then we wrapped ourselves in towels and sat on this bench and three or four people covered us in it. Each guy took about 15 or 20 minutes. We covered ourselves and then we just sat there and went through about 5 minutes of photo after photo after photo per guy, doing different poses, trying to capture that look of being reborn, and coming out of the muck, ya know? (Laughs)

It's totally effective. I'm telling you, it's very effective.

I think it is. It makes a powerful statement. I think unfortunately... we're in 2005 and to hear people say 'oh, I'm not buying it, it's evil...' I've heard people say this! It boggles my mind! We're in 2005 and...there are more offensive album covers out there and they've sold 3, 4 million and...it just blows my mind to hear statements like that, ya know?

Well, what you gonna do...it's part of the game, I guess.

At least gives us a chance to explain it!

This is one of the venues where you're gonna be able to do that.

We have Chordant distributing into the Christian market. They dis-

***"...it's going to be covered with a yellow sleeve.
You can somewhat still see through it,
and that's what's going to be distributed to the Christian chains."***

and muck – every one of us. And there's only one way we're gonna be able to be set free and be cleansed, and to be able to break free from that, and that's through the power of Jesus Christ. Once we make that commitment, we are reborn. That's what that album says, and that's what that cover says. And when you think about it that way, that's a beautiful thing, not an ugly thing. Yeah, it's kind of ugly to look at those photos, but if you go to see Passion of the Christ...I mean, is it pretty to see Christ being beaten?

Absolutely not.

It's horrific.

It's grisly.

It's grisly. It's horrific. You sit there and you watch it in shock, and I think a lot of people are going to look at this album cover and are going to be shocked. But hopefully the end result will be that they will be moved by it and they will be able to realize that it takes committing your life to Christ to be set free and we can all be born again. That's what we want to convey with that imagery.

What was that yellow gunk anyway? (laughs)

It's this stuff that you can purchase from film production companies. It comes in a powder form and...I forget what it's called...and you mix it with water. It's basically the 'alien' slime that you see in the movie *Alien*. Same stuff.

Only yellow.

Well, we added yellow food dye. So it's clear, we just made it yellow.

I heard it was everything from mustard to motor oil...(laughs)

Nah, man...it felt almost like that stuff you can buy at toy stores, or that you could buy until a year or so ago, that slimy stuff?

Like Nickelodeon slime!

Exactly. That's exactly what it felt like. The consistency was a little more liquefied, and we just set there in this giant bucket with a spoon and whipped it up. Everyone took turns stirring it, and then we

tribute a lot of stuff. They're one of the top 3 Christian distribution companies and I guess they saw the artwork a couple of weeks ago and they said it was going to be "too offensive" for the Christian bookstores. So what we had to do was, I wrote a statement basically explaining everything I just explained to you...and what they're going to do, is that it's going to be covered with a yellow sleeve. You can somewhat still see through it, and that's what's going to be distributed to the Christian chains. The mainstream, like Tower Records and whatnot, they'll be carrying the one without the sleeve. At least, that's what I've been told. (laughs)

So basically this was a move to appease the Christian market? I mean, obviously you don't want to go out of your way to scandalize people, but...

That's right. We thought about this, 'OK, if I have a 3-year-old, and they're at the local Christian store...' they might walk by and it might scare them. They don't understand it. We're trying to take that approach. We don't want to damage young minds. (laughs)

Stryper was in the midst of the LA rock scene in the 80s and you went from that into being a family man and working as a forest ranger in New England?

Well, I was. I was a ranger at a family-owned campground/cranberry business and I worked there for a number of years...3 or 4 years but I no longer work there. Just music.

I was going to say, because...now, you guys have gone full circle where you're going to hit the road again and the band is going on strong...how was the transition from going from a regular job to 100% music again?

Well, I stopped working there around 2001, so it's been going on 5 years since I've been doing music full-time. I did my solo record *Truth* and did a tour and got into a lot of producing...local bands and artists...so I've had my foot in music ever since. So there's been really no transition. Maybe then it was. And it was fine, because I've been doing it for so long, it felt so natural to go back to music. So it was really no big deal at all.

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What Napalm Death Says...sort of

[Here is the only remnant left of a cool interview with Mark "Barney" Greenway (formerly of Benediction) of Napalm Death. We opted not to include this in the magazine, because it was fractured and it didn't include "the Jesus Question."]

Doug: Hey Barney how's it going?

Barney: How's it going man?

Ah, going great.

Yeah?

I visited your wonderful country and really dug it.

Oh, right oh, that's nice.

Yeah.

So anyway, are you still there?

Yeah, I'm still there, man.

Alright, you ready to do an interview?

Yes, yes, fine fine fine. Go for it.

Great. Well, uh, why don't you tell me a little bit about what you're doing with Kerrang! I hear you're reviewing uh, lots of video games with them and what brought that about and how's that going?

Yeah! Alright! Um, interesting first question, uh, yeah, uh, yeah man, that's something I've done for a while, you know, uh for a few years, I, I used to do it for another magazine, um, called Select... Kind of a, it's like kind of an England kind of personal . . . but it's kind of like one of those lifestyle magazines as well.

Mmmhm

So I was kind of doing it for them for a while, but things happened and it kind of fell apart. But uh, you know, Kerrang! was kind of waiting in the

wind you know, I kind of wanted to work for them for a while and so, so I kind of went along with them, you know and because the Kerrang! people had become personal friends of mine, you know, that's sort any other bull(bleep) you know, they uh, you know, they're . . . I enjoy it. It's a great thing. I love video games, you know... To work in it and get paid to play these games. To work in it, you know, to be able to get stuff from, you know . . . it's obviously a good thing.

Yeah. So do you have, like, the ultimate setup with your computer?

Yeah, I've got like a really good PC, you know. Cause I look at things on old formats, you know. I've got a really good PC that really portrays the graphics in a great way. So I'm pretty excited with what I've got, you know...

That's cool. Why don't you tell me a little bit

about Napalm Death's rhythmic approach and uh, your approach to songwriting and...

Ok, alright, rhythmic approach, um, it's hard to say really, because um, there's all kinds of different things in the bands nowadays. Um, all the traditional elements are there of which if you know Napalm Death – if you're familiar with Napalm Death, I mean, I guess you can kinda recognize, uh, one of the first bands to really be brilliant, at least good in our minds – really super fast, you know, kind of rhythms. We took it a bit slow and, you know, we'd detune guitars and stuff like that, which, people kind of look at bands like Korn and say, "Oh these are the bands, you know, that detune guitars." It's really, in a way, what we were doing twelve years ago, you know? So, these guys... It just came from, you know, the band's willingness to not compromise. We knew... the guys that were in the band at the time, which excludes me, were just totally into just playing, you know, really uncompromising...

As far as songwriting goes, I mean, it's pretty much the same as always. I mean, to a greater or lesser extent, we all get together and like, when each person in the band has any songs, they basically make a collection of it and present it to the band and make suggestions as to drum breaks and stuff like that...

Mmhmm

...and everyone looks at it as a whole and brings up opinions and certain changes that they might want to make, and then, you know, it kind of all comes together in the end and generally, I will go in and write the lyrics once I've got the music, although I've already got stuff in my head that I want to write about, you know, it just helps if you got some music there to be able to write things over.

Mmhmm. I know for the fan, the Napalm Death fan, when you left, and joined Extreme Noise Terror and then now that you're back I think it came as, like, a big shock to people, cause they were like, "Oh, he's gone and now he's back!" What was behind all that and how did that whole thing come about you know?

Yeah... to start off, a lot of people thought it was a publicity stunt. You know but, can people in their right minds really know Napalm? Could they really say that Napalm had been you know, going along all these years, cause people think that we were really, you know, would stoop so low as to do something like that! I mean, it's like, it's just totally untrue, you know. Um, I mean it was just, you know, things weren't going well as a band for quite awhile; we were in each other's pockets all the time. I'm sure you can imagine how that would get stressful.

Mmhmm

Um, we, and, and, just, you know, there was different opinions on music and all of that, and uh, lack of communication, which was one of the main things... So, you know, I got kicked out... You know, that's one thing that I would like to include is that I actually got ejected from the band. And, just what happened eventually was that Extreme Noise Terror, which was one of the things that I was doing, came along and said that they were going to do an album, and asked me if I would join full time and I said, "Well, I don't want to," because,

for one I was coming out of a band, you know... I didn't want to commit to something like that so easily again. Um, and, you know, and secondly, I kind of wanted to do my own band. Not my own band, but a fresh band.

I'd start from fresh, you know, rather than jumping into someone else's bowl. So they said, "You know, why don't I just do the album?" And that was kind of done and, "Ok, that one's done, what are we going to do next?" You know, so I was kind of going through college and stuff like that and, you know, Napalm things just weren't going too well in the studio... Me and Shane, the bass player, kind of got friendly again, because I'm always a forgiving person, you know? I don't hold grudges against people for things, unless it's really, really severe, you know?

Mmhmm

...And we kind of got together and we were friends again, and we just kind of went from there. One thing led to another, Phil wasn't doing so well in the studio, wasn't coping with it, you know... He really needed something with the kind of power and back to do it, and it seemed as if I was the only one that could do it. I'm not trying to blow my own trumpet when I say that, but, you know, it just seemed like the logical thing for them. Sometimes there are things that we always take for granted, you know? Abra Kadabra I was back in the band.

Mmhmm (chuckles) I understand you've had sort of, like, a fear of flying and I'm sure that would inhibit international touring. What have you done to overcome that?

I kind of, you know, I got that sorted out. I kind of went through therapy. Um, and I'm real hesitant . . . it's difficult to deal with therapists, you know.

But, I went to a guy that turned out to be more of a friend.

Really?

Yeah, he really helped me through it, you know? And admittedly, you know, when you've got it as severe as I do, you know, you get all the help you can get. You find you've got to give it a chance — so I did it and he really helped me and I, I didn't even know him before that, but after what he did, he's just become a good friend. I haven't seen him for a while, but I consider him to be a confidant

"I don't hold grudges against people for things, unless it's really, really severe, you know?"

and a great friend. I mean, in the kind of middle place there when I was out of Napalm and I was still kind of with Extreme, he was a good friend. He came to be more than just an acquaintance or a therapist or whatever.

Cool, what kind of things did they do? Is there anything interesting as far as the flying therapy?

I mean, it all kind of culminated with me actually flying. That's what the final run up allowed. Cause I hadn't flown in a couple of years, because I was just terrified, you know. I really was. But no, he just kind of, like, kind of hypnotized me, you know, and took me back to my childhood and stuff like that because, I've had kind of a history of it with my family... He just kind of took me back and— it's hard for me to remember, cause it was quite a while ago now. A lot of it was a blur anyway, because you know, when you're going through something like that, it's kind of hairy...

Mmhmm. What kind of reaction have you received from people from all different sides of the fence to you, as far as, like, Nazi punks?

Oh, yeah, obviously we've had different reactions on that. I mean, you know, I've got a lot of friends, you know? I mean, different people. All of my friends, you know are . . . a lot of them are, like, hardcore, and stuff like that. They all echoed that sentiment, you know, and they really liked it — bashing the media oppression, you know?

[Thus abruptly ends the Napalm Death interview... Perhaps we'll find the lost tapes someday or just pick up the phone and interview him again...]





Photo by Franco Cristini

What Skid Row (almost) Says...

[I started "interviewing" Skid Row frontman Sebastian Bach via email in 1996, and what follows is how far the interview went.]

How was the tour with Van Halen?

It was a dream come true! As far as attendance went, we consistently drew more people in each city we played than the Lollapalooza. The guys in Van Halen were the nicest guys you could ever want to meet.

Boy, was that fast or what? I just sent the question five minutes ago! Must've caught you online or sumthin.' Question 2: Okay, the attendance was a better draw than Lollapalooza. What does this tell us about the state of metal in the USA? And what are your opinions on the "music revolution" and the industry's role in promoting it?

What "music revolution?"

What did you think of the Rhino records 80's metal compilations called *Youth Gone Wild*? How do you feel about them using your song title and not even including you on the cds?

We're not "'80's metal." The cd's suck (bleep). You can't copyright song titles. We're just about to start

on a new cd. Diversity obviously is a good thing. Why eat hamburger all the time when you can have a steak?

What do you think would happen if large numbers of people in this country turned their

*"I think my heart is in my chest.
Concerning God, I think he was the one who put it there."*

What would you like to see God do?

I wish he'd crack some whip on the SUBHUMAN rACE.

What do you mean by that? How so?

Cause obviously we as a SUBHUMAN rACE -- we're going down the tubes.

Okay, so you'd like to see Jesus whip this sub-human race into shape cause it's going down the tubes. What would you like to see Him do that would whip us into shape?

I guess that would be up to him he could start by outlawing handguns in this screwed up country.

hearts toward God? Where do you think your heart is concerning God?

I think my heart is in my chest. Concerning God, I think he was the one who put it there.

What do you think about his claims to be "the way, the truth, and the life?" How do you feel concerning the gift of life He gave you? Meaning, what sort of debt do you feel you owe Him? What has kept you from entering a life of priesthood, or preaching the Gospel on street corners?

Pigs fly?

[And that was the last email received...]

Are you planning to take this tour to places you haven't been yet? Because being originally from Brazil, I hear a lot of people there asking 'how come Stryper has never played here,' and...do you have any plans to go to Brazil, ever? (laughs)

I haven't figured that one out yet...I really...I can't tell you why. We've been asked to come to Brazil probably ten times. Maybe more. And it's almost worked out, and then it falls through, and this doesn't work out, blah blah blah...and I can't understand why. But I know there are a lot of fans there and we do want to go and we will try to make that happen, hopefully this time around. We just went to Spain for the first time. We did a show there with Maiden and Dream Theater and it was awesome.

How was that?

It was fantastic. I mean, we were a little nervous...it was a Maiden crowd, they were headlining...and we had to go out and close after Maiden. We went on at Midnight. It was very late and it was an all-day festival, but an unbelievable thing happened: the crowd actually grew! We expected the crowd to break up and wind up being half the size, but it actually grew. I don't know if more people came in after Maiden or if they came in from the back, since it was a big fair-ground. They just all gathered together and it was just this massive crowd. We went on in our street clothes because we lost all of our luggage, with all the back-up gear...Robert had to borrow sticks from Nicko (McBrain, drummer for Iron Maiden)...it was just ridiculous! So we went out there in our street clothes and back-up gear expecting the crowd to dwindle and it was unbelievable! They sang every word...it just blew our minds!

That's got to give you goosebumps for weeks!

It was unbelievable.

From going into a venue like that with, say, less than 100% confidence, to being received like that...it's got to pump you up!

, it was hard, man. We were nervous. We were about as nervous as we've been in a long time. And we didn't want to show it, but...you're going out there and you don't have your clothes and you don't have your gear, which is really weird...we had some of our stuff, but I was missing my wireless...ya know, just a lot of stuff which kind of added to the show and made us more comfortable, and it was gone.

How was it lost?

The airline just lost it. We wound up getting a lot of our stuff back, but I still don't have my clothes back. They're gone, for good. Some Spanish lady is wearing them on a beach somewhere...(laughs)

(Laughs) Were they yellow and black? (laughs even harder)

Yeah, man...Yellow Converses and everything! But it was just an incredible show! It was our first time there, and I guess we spoke with a lot of people there and they said 'yeah, we love Maiden but they come here ten times a year'...we've seen them too much. We've never seen you guys! Everyone was just really excited about seeing Stryper.

I think it's interesting how you mentioned that you guys were nervous, because I think it was actually Bruce Dickinson who said, after being asked if he still get goosebumps before going onstage, 'yeah, all the time. When I stop getting them, it's time for me to quit.'

Yeah, that's true; I always get nervous before every show. The typical butterfly in the stomach, and you get that adrenaline rush and it's like, whoa! Here we go! But this was different. This was almost like a fear (laughs). We were a little fearful, like 'oh my Gosh, guys....ooohhh...I hope everything works.' (laughs again) That kind of a thing. And we went out and we did it, and thank God the crowd was responsive and such a wonderful crowd and really cool.

That's awesome. I think I only have one more question: the band has been on the road doing this for 20 years and counting. Do you expect to be doing this way past your fifties, or beyond, another 20 years even? How do you see yourself, in your role, as Stryper, going on further from here?

I tell you, I could be putting my feet in my mouth here, but...I'm gonna say, until our mid-50s...ya know...I don't want to be onstage when I'm 65, looking like I'm 65, hobbling around...

So you're not going to pull a Rolling Stones on us, then?

No, unless we're doing some different type of music and doing something completely different, but actually doing the 'yellow-and-black', going (screams) AAAAAAAHHHH — I dunno, man. It's just...(sighs)

It wouldn't be right.

I don't know that it would be. But ya know, we'll see it when we get there, if we get there, but that's my guess. As long as we take care of ourselves, you never know. We feel good, we eat right, we exercise, we treadmill, we don't drink, we don't smoke, we don't do drugs. Time has been good to us.

You're probably in the best shape you have ever been in your life, aren't you?

Ya know, I think I'm in as good as shape, if not better. I feel better now than when I was 20 years old. I got sick all time, I ate horribly and never worked out. And now I eat right and work out and...I'm active and yeah, cholesterol is low, and blood pressure is low. (laughs)

That's what it's all about!

(Laughs) Yeah, so who knows? If we stay in shape we might be doing this longer than expected.

We parted ways, as I wished him God's blessings and good luck in their tour. I told him I would definitely see them at the House of Blues in Chicago when the tour hits the Windy City. Michael was extroverted, approachable, and funny. This barely felt like an interview. It felt like a conversation between two buddies.

Not bad for a hero.



I'M AN ALICE COOPER FAN

BY MIKE LARSON



*Listen to the man who's been touched all his life
yes he's the one they call the fool
Where is that savior of the sidewalk life
and the road that takes us to the crusades
I've seen those shadows as they're moving in my sleep
leading the blind poet to his grave
'cause we still got a long way to go*

(Alice Cooper 1971)

It was January 22nd, 1987 I was running from the Greyhound bus stop to the Spokane Opera House, the bus had been scheduled to arrive earlier than it did, so I was running late. I remember for the first time in my life wishing I had learned to run faster, realizing the value to going out for track as I navigated my way thru the alleys trying desperately to pick the quickest route possible to Opera House, you see Alice Cooper was playing that night. And I had yet to see his live show, and I was not going to let anything stand in my way. I still remember that night well, the anticipation and wonder were like electricity in the air, could the Alice Cooper show live up to the hype? Well it did, I was not disappointed!

I have been blessed enough to see Alice on two other occasions since Spokane, and both times the show was absolutely stunning. Alice Cooper live is an amazing thing! Truly an entertainer in every sense of the word, demanding your attention, drawing you into the mad world that has been created on the stage and titillating your senses with insanity and horror. All the while he croons out delightfully dark and morbid songs of wit and jest flawlessly. You know that evening in Spokane Washington made me a believer and each show after has driven a spike into the thought solidifying it permanently. Alice is the king of shock rock!

*For criminal acts and violence on the stage
For being a brat
Refusing to act your age
For all of the decent citizens you've enraged
You can go to Hell*

(Alice Cooper 1976)

Born the son of a preacher man, Vincent better known as Alice has carved his face into the annals of rock and roll history. Not only with an amazing live act, but his lyrics also, the ability to turn a phrase with such wit and cynicism is rivaled by very few. With multiple platinum albums he has weathered musical trends without withering, easily overcoming generational gaps by retaining freshness found only in a handful of exceptional artists. The latest Alice platter, *Dirty Diamonds*, is an absolutely brilliant classic rock album, yet despite its classic sound it is not haggard, worn or tired, *Dirty Diamonds* is fresh, it sounds like it could have been penned sometime in the seventies, yet somehow it is a perfect fit for today.

Sometime in the early 90's Alice became a Christian. Well not necessarily Alice but Vincent, the man behind the mask did. The man who was "into fun, sex, death and money when everybody was into peace and love" is now into Jesus and morality when everybody else is into Satan and sin. After his change of heart there were five albums that have been recorded that retain a Christian world view. Though he would contend that Alice has never been purposely satanic and had more of a goal to come off vaudeville than evil.

Alice Cooper, always the villain has retained his bad guy persona despite this personal change in Vincent's life. In an interview that appeared in our sister publication HM (Issue #94) a few years back, Alice explained how he was able to do so quite eloquently. This interview really affected the way I viewed art and somehow helped me realize the value of being creative and impacting our world without "church speak." We can break outside this bubble and take Christ to a dying world in many ways. What may work for one may not be the message given to another.

*What about truth
What about life
What about glory
What about Christ*

*What about peace
What about love
What about faith in God above*

(Alice Cooper 1994)

Now I am sure that many if not all of the Heavens Metal subscribers already know about Alice's conversion to Christianity. But I could be wrong, I still find time and time again when brought up in Christian circles the name Alice Cooper evokes a harsh reaction and the fact he is saved is unknown. I was working at a sandwich shop and an acquaintance from church came in to eat lunch. As I made his sandwich we made some small talk, I said something about some artist being Christian, and his reply was a somewhat smug as he said something to the effect of "next thing you know your going to tell me Alice Cooper is a Christian." I stopped working and looked up and said, "Actually he is." He had a hard time believing me as I pressed the issue. And I think that somehow my validity as a believer took a hit in his eyes too as he walked out. It amazes me how we put so many things in boxes and refusing to accept that people who are different can be valid as believers.

So as you can tell, I love Alice Cooper, and I am truly encouraged by his faith. I really wanted to actually interview Alice for this article, but since he is out on a world tour right now there was no way possible to orchestrate that. Though his label was kind enough to send me a copy of the new album, and what a great album it is. I know that there is a review of this album done by someone who is much less of a fan boy than I in this magazine. But I really want to tell you that I found it quite enthralling. He is still able to be quite shocking despite his Christianity and it is quite refreshing. In a world where we try to beat others into our own image, Alice smiles a sly grin and makes a wise crack. I thank God for Alice Cooper, the mess he was, the monster he can be and the blessing that he is.



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ALBUM REVIEWS



MORPHIA

FADING BEAUTY

Luckily, this album did not live up to its title. This is a masterpiece of doom, and the beauty of it stays for the whole album. It has two different vocal deliveries (Clean and Growls) that almost flawlessly compliment each other. The guitar work is heavy and commanding, and even the keys that are used to accent the music instead of detracting. This album has everything that a doom album has to have: Haunting clean vocals that tend to be over an acoustic guitar, or something as soft; and they also have some great harmonics in their singing – two voices complimenting each other.

One of the songs that sticks out the most is "Meaning of Forever 2." It starts out with a lone voice over an acoustic guitar, then progresses to two voices, then the guitar fades out to be replaced by a violin. Then, there is further progression when the full blown band comes in with power, maintaining the gloomy feeling that was first established.

The lyrics are typical of doom, painting a sad picture of lost love and of sorrowful landscapes. This album conveys a story of a man whose lover dies a horrendous death, and he is left mourning with this beauty that is now disfigured. Such a story is a wonderful companion to the music, as they entangle into one essence, an essence of Fading Beauty. [Fear Dark] Daniel Jesse



ASHEN MORTALITY

YOUR CARESS / SLEEPLESS REMORSE

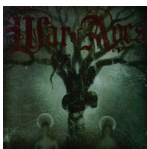
Ashen Mortality was amazing at what they did. Mid tempo doom metal with haunting female vocals, intense death growls and mournful male vocals. Sadly, they are no more. Now you can get both of their releases in one spot, beautifully remastered and sounding better than ever for the re-release by the cats at Cold Fusion. This is definitely cool! [Cold Fusion] Mike Larson



MORTAL TREASON

SUNRISE OVER A SEA OF BLOOD

From the first note on this disc you know something is different. Of course, the addition of a keyboardist might account for some of that change – it has added a beautiful haunting feel to the music here. But the keys are not the only difference in the music on this disc. Overall, these kids have stepped it up a notch or two. Pretty much everything seems better on this album. This is metalcore with death metal and black metal influences. You've got to dig it when they opt for a speed picking part instead of the standard breakdown. Now they still have some o' them "core" style breakdowns from time to time, so you can "kung fu dance" all you want when they stop by your town; but, honestly this disc is pretty much relentless. Mortal Treason wants to beat you into submission! The drumming on this disc is fun and brutal, plenty of fast double kicks and tons of intensity. Vocally, this is still the Mortal Treason I came to love in the past, and now it seems that the band has caught up with the singer! Lyrically, their relationship with Christ shines thru beautifully bold and strong without losing an artistic edge. [Flicker] Mike Larson



WAR OF AGES

s/t

This band breaks that evil Genre-Nazi's rules: (by) crossing musical boundaries and having great chops on their instruments. Sometimes it's just straight up hardcore; sometimes it's metalcore but then they add these beautifully crafted and excellently executed classic metal guitar solos, and it's awesome! I would say that overall the guitar work on this album is simply amazing, the acoustic parts, the riffing, the melodic interludes, and the solos all rule. I want to see them live now!

[Strike First] Mike Larson

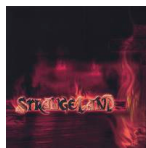


TYKKÜS

ÜMLAUT

This is heavy metal in the vein of Messiah Prophet and Saint. *Ümlaut* is a 4 song MCD with 5 songs on it; one song has two separate renditions. Lyrically this is quite reminiscent of the mid eighties Christian metal; each song a sermon you can head bang along with! Tykküs has real skill in the songwriting department. I do enjoy this immensely, yet I find myself wanting the singer to have more time in the studio. This is good, but I bet he could do better.

[Stone Groove] Mike Larson

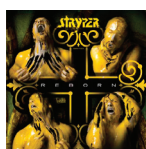


STRANGELAND

DEMO

The first song kicks in a bit reminiscent of an old Dio riff, and turns out to be a great tune. I found myself singing along to the chorus and wanting to hear it again and again. I don't know if it's because I loved the first song so much or what, but the second two songs were a touch derivative and nowhere near as enjoyable to me as the first. Listen, if you want some good ole' heavy metal, this band will deliver.

[Indie] Mike Larson



STRYPER

REBORN

This old-school glam metal declares that it is back with the release of *Reborn*. But, there is one major problem with this statement., which is, this is not metal. It is not even glam. It lacks the power and vibe created by their back catalog. Sweet seemingly wrote these songs for his solo project, and added these ex-Stryper guys to help out on the execution of the ideas. This is also problematic, as Sweet has lost at least an octave of his range. Also, there were no cohesive songs on this. They seemed to be ideas that were going to be songs, but they just go on repeating boring choruses and do not have the hooks that Stryper had. [Big 3] Daniel Jesse



WARRIOR

THE BATTLE HAS STARTED
This band is somewhat of an enigma to me. They look like William Wallace and King Arthur put together a black metal band, yet they play a mix between a pop metal and rock and roll. They tend to remind me of April Wine at times vocally, but I don't think the music sounds quite that dated to me. And the production is good, too. So, if you like catchy rock and roll songs that you hear on the radio, this may be for you. [Indie] Mike Larson



NINETEEN88

THE GREAT AMERICAN ROCK AND ROLL SPECTACLE
This is meant to be a fun rock and roll album. Seems to me Nineteen88 celebrate the cheese of days gone by with a slight tongue in cheek style while still loving every second of it. The riffs of this album are eighties inspired all the way; rocket fuel filled rock and roll. The lyrics are not deep in any way, but over the top fun. But what do you expect with song titles like "Rock all Day," "Rock and Roll," and "Where did the 80's go?" Honestly, the guitar solos are quite nice. Not too flashy, but really quite stylish with a soulful feel. The production is quite nice and the album sounds great, which is something that strikes me as funny when I listen to him go on about the metal pokey. The singing is raspy, almost biker rock style, but still seems to be hair metal inspired. You are either going to love it as it takes you down memory lane, get inspired to go check out some old school metal and rock, or dismiss it as cheese. Anyway you slice it; *The Great American Rock and Roll Spectacle* does exactly what it's supposed to. So bust loose the Aqua Net, get out the denim and leather and lets rock and roll baby! [Indie] Mike Larson



FROST LIKE ASHES

TOPHET
FLA tries to build their own sound on this album. It is a mixture of black\death metal, with the occasional atmospheric parts provided by the keyboards. This is a marked improvement from their previous effort. The songwriting has matured and so has the ability to play their instruments. Also on this album, they re-do "A Cruel Voice," which reflects where they are, and where they want to go. This is something that any fan of Christian Black\Death should check out, as Frost Like Ashes put a new spin on old ideas. [PsychoAcoustix] Daniel Jesse



PURSUIT QUEST

What a find this band is! The CD cover threw me for a loop, and I just wasn't expecting this. This is progressive metal with a classic rock vibe. Dan Wolfe is brilliant on both the fret board and the keys. For a self-produced album, it sounds quite excellent. And the vocalist has great tone and control. It's evident these guys love their instruments. The two bands I would say they remind me of the most would be Kansas and Dream Theater. [Indie] Mike Larson



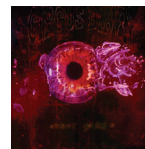
ALICE COOPER

DIRTY DIAMONDS
This album picks up where Alice left off back in the seventies. Alice seems to have found how to create good and catchy songs, with lyrics that probe the mooring of popular culture. It is not the music that is extreme, as it ranges from 70's rock to a little bit of ... dare I say Country? And then to top it off, his last song has a guest performance by the rapper Xhibit. But, in typical fashion, his music is secondary, while his lyrics are the main focus. If you like the classic rock styling of Alice, this would be a good disc to pick up. If not, this might be the album that gets you hooked. [New West] Daniel Jesse



HOLY BLOOD

THE WANDERER
Holy Blood blast on the scene with an inspiring Celtic folk influenced black metal disc that is amazingly solid for a freshman release. The songs are well crafted and the riffs enjoyable, though one song is a touch repetitive. The "death" vocals are probably not for everyone, but the "black" voice is solid. Personally I think this is a must have album for anyone into the extreme metal genre. [Bombworks] Mike Larson



CIRCUS DAWN

AVANT GARDE
Circus Dawn is a Nu-Metal band. Now I am not generally a fan of this genre of music, but I've got to say these guys do it well. Strong songs with catchy hooks, they've got the image going and a quality recording. I expect that you will hear them on the radio soon. [Indie] Mike Larson



DEAD IN CHRIST

FUNERAL FOR THE FLESH
I want to call this band Armageddon Corpulence or Vomitorial Holocaust. If that sounds appealing you may want to check this out. [Indie] Mike Larson



DELOREAN

DAUNTLESS
Female fronted Deleorean plays a mix of classic rock and eighties metal. I didn't know what to expect when I stuck this in and was so pleasantly surprised with the level of maturity in the guitar work. It hints that we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg of what Deleorean is capable of. Please don't get me wrong, the songs on this are good, solid, and well crafted. Yet when the leads kick in, this disc is carried up a level. [Indie] Mike Larson



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THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN, YOU PLAN TO FAIL.

At forty years of age I have recently wondered how I have packed so much into such a short life. Before I recommitted my life to Christ at age 19 I was a very disorganized person. This resulted in my failure in high school. After failing the final year in 1982, I spent a year working in a storeroom for a big retail store. I had always believed that life had bigger things for me. In 1984 I spent a year studying physical education with the view to pursuing a career as a personal trainer or a sports teacher.

1984 was a great year, because I came back to walking the narrow road with Christ, started my first Christian metal band, and studied very hard for the first time in my life. One teacher had a big impact on my life after telling her of my failures. She said, 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Work out who you want to be and, right now today, write down plan A, B & C for your life. Then plan to succeed in all these plans and find the real you. Write down all that you wish to achieve.'

Plan A was to be a personal trainer, Plan B to be a sports teacher and plan C to reach the world for Christ through a ministry metal band. From '84 through '86, I worked hard on all 3 plans. In short, I was too lightweight to be a personal trainer (Such were the 80's?!), I only completed 2 years at teachers' college and finally decided that only plan C was what I really wanted to achieve.

For the past 19 years I have always known at least 12 months in advance what my music ministry aims were. For example, if planning an International tour, it was always well prepared ahead of time, leaving little room for error and believing that God would bring any endeavor safely to completion. In eighteen years of touring, Lightforce/Mortification has cancelled on just one



show. Sure, I have pulled out on a couple of tours, but always months in advance so as to not lose faith with fans or promoters. I write everything down, pray about it while in the action of planning it, & listen closely to that still small voice in my heart leading me each step of the way.

Submit your ways unto God & He will direct your path.

In these evil times we will rise!



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GUEST ADVICE COLUMN

By Doug Van Pelt

How to heal someone.

1. Interview the "patient." Find out what's wrong.
2. Ask God what to do. (He might suggest putting mud in their eyes, He might tell you to ask the "patient" if they have faith, etc)
3. Do what God tells you to do.
4. Interview the "patient." Find out how they're doing.
(Their healing might come in progressive steps.
A blind person might answer you like, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." In Mark 8, that was a cue for Jesus to put his hands on the man's eyes once more, upon which his sight was restored.)
5. Repeat steps 2, 3, and 4 if/as directed by God.

How to cast a demon out of someone.

1. Ask God what to do.
2. Do what God tells you to do.
3. Interview the "patient."
4. Repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 if/as directed by God.

How to lead someone to salvation.

1. Interact and listen to the person or persons.
2. Ask God what to do or say.
3. Do what God tells you to do.

While these three acts may seem like formulas, they all share one thing in common: interaction/communication with the Living God. No two instances may ever be the same. In using Jesus as a model, He only did what the Father told Him to do, and many times that was different than the previous instance. For example, on one occasion (Luke 13) He asked a woman who'd been bent over by a spirit for 18 years to come forward. He pronounced her freedom on the spot. At other times, He spit in a man's eye or asked, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9). There is no formula but one: Obey the Father. This is the common denominator in all three of these scenarios.

Each one of these scenerios might confront us one day; and each scenario begs one thing – a miracle. God absolutely must "show up" for any of these things to take place. May it be that He does (again and again)... in our lives!

Wouldn't that be cool?



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DAVID BENSON (VOCALS), ROBERT SWEET (STRYPER) DRUMS, DALE GREER (GUITARS)

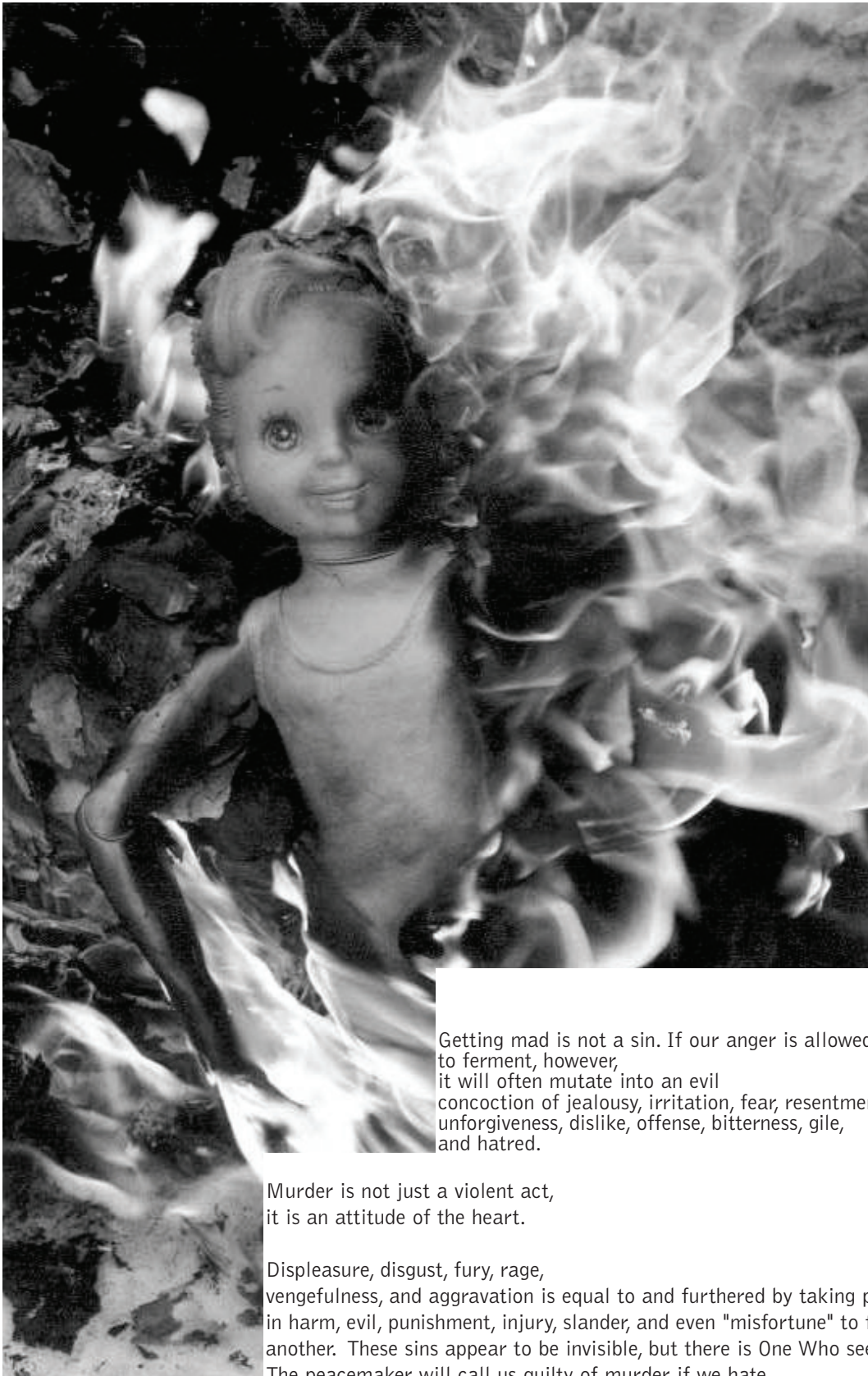


Photo by David Hunter Jr.

got hatred?

Getting mad is not a sin. If our anger is allowed to ferment, however, it will often mutate into an evil concoction of jealousy, irritation, fear, resentment, unforgiveness, dislike, offense, bitterness, gile, and hatred.

Murder is not just a violent act,
it is an attitude of the heart.

Displeasure, disgust, fury, rage, vengeance, and aggravation is equal to and furthered by taking pleasure in harm, evil, punishment, injury, slander, and even "misfortune" to fall on another. These sins appear to be invisible, but there is One Who sees all. The peacemaker will call us guilty of murder if we hate, but He'll also heal us on the inside.